

HOW TO STUDY YOUR OWN SCHOOL

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If in this period of readjustment a commission should be appointed to study the American home, not the slums nor the aristocracy, but homes like yours, what would you want them to look for? With what spirit would you want them to come? Would you want them to consider: what you are trying to do; what spirit you are trying to breathe into your children; what handicaps there are over which you have no control; whether you are a better homemaker than you were, and whether you are forward looking, patriotic, clear-sighted in facing the big problems that your children must solve in the community, church and school? Then what would be your attitude towards constructive criticism given by this commission? Would you welcome it, study it, understand it, and profit by it, and above all to whom would you want this criticism given, to you or your neighbors?

Your school being but another phase of your children's home life, questions that are good for one are good for the other. Let us then use them as a guide for the study of your own school. Be the kind of a visitor you would want the supposed commission to send to your home. Go with an open mind. Do not expect to find the best or the worst school. There is no best school. In spite of city or village advantages and organization there may be a little unknown teacher in some cross road country school who has a vision and a personality far surpassing anything you possess. When do you visit the school? When Johnny is in trouble? You would not want to be visited just after your clothes line had broken or two of the children had whooping cough keeping you awake nights and with its attendant disorder in household arrangements. Go so often that your coming will pass unnoticed. Takes time? Yes, it does, but some very good stocking darning has been done while mother listened to a reading lesson. She was so much more natural, too, than when she sat up for half an hour with company manners on.

How can you judge the spirit of the school? A pretty good test is the kind of programs put on. Are they for show or do they give many children a chance to take part? Are there single stars or many constellations? Do they "play" or "display?" What spirit do they put into the holidays? What remarks do the children drop casually? If an unfortunate child is reciting what is the unexpressed but instinctively felt spirit of the class towards his mistakes?

So much for spirit! Now, how can you find out what the school is trying to do? Schools have changed since you were a child, the last two years are forcing changes so fast that unless you really try to keep up with them you will be hopelessly lost. Parents and teachers

have been thinking big thoughts; first things are being put first; housekeeping and clothes making are not any more allowed to come before the solution of the problems concerning the bringing up of children. But the question is, "How can I find out what the school is trying to do?"

Call the parents together and ask the principal and teachers to tell you. Meet with open minds. Do not bring in personalities. You want information.

What are your handicaps? Perhaps one is lack of money for high grade teachers and adequate equipment, probably. That is true everywhere. Do you stiffen up when taxes are mentioned? We teachers are probably to blame for some of the antagonistic attitude of citizens towards taxes. We have lauded the Revolutionary Forefathers for refusing "taxation without representation," but somehow we have left the wrong spirit about taxation with representation. Paying taxes should be looked on as a sacrament and not as a penalty. Then you might see if a high-grade, intelligent citizenship is being taught so that when taxes are paid none of the money must go for graft, and that in future thought may be put on just laws of taxation. Call your parents together again to meet with the school board to study financial problems.

Can you tell if your teachers are growing? They have faults of course just as you have but are they weaknesses that time and experience will remedy?

Lastly are you as parents ready to cooperate with the schools in carrying out the program the government is putting into action that our children may be strong physically, sound mentally, reliable morally, to read and speak English fluently and to be master of unexpected situations?—From Parent-Teacher Association Department in *School and Home Education*.

MANUAL WORK FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

The following five paragraphs are five separate extracts from a very readable book "Community Civics," by Field and Nearing. They suggest activities that any strong teacher might introduce. Note, for instance, the fifth paragraph. The teacher, we assume, cannot splice a rope. How interested her boys would be, however, if some rainy day she invited a man to school to teach rope-splicing. The same applies to other things which are outside the teacher's experience. Here are the clippings:

"In one school the boys made a reading table from pieces that were left over in building a house near the school. They stained it a pretty brown, and on it they put many farm journals and other magazines that people, who had already read them, gave to the school. These boys made a rack, too, for filing farm bulletins, and a sand table for the little children. They mended a place in the fence that was broken, and made a cupboard to put the dinner pails away in. The girls did